

May 11, 2000

SMALL MISSIONS STUDY – IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Small Missions Study sponsored by the Management Council was presented to the Council at its February 29 meeting. The Council requested that an implementation plan be prepared that identified those high priority recommendations that could be accomplished within a short time frame and within resource constraints. It was also decided that action responsibility and a time line should be established for each of these recommendations. This document presents that implementation plan, which was developed in a series of consultations with study participants representing all bureaus, and with additional input from a number of Mission Directors. Details of the analysis underpinning these recommendations may be found in the basic report, "Small USAID Missions and the Future: Protecting and Upgrading Our Overseas Capabilities."

The primary focus is on the category 1 recommendations below. This does not mean that recommendations in other categories do not have merit, or that they should not be implemented if the opportunity to do so arises. Our operating assumption is that it is better to ensure that a few very important changes are made, rather than to jeopardize the whole effort by overextending.

1 – High Priority Recommendations: Immediate Implementation

1. Organizational Analysis. The Agency will require an organizational analysis for all new USAID missions prior to start-up. M/HR's Policy division and OMS can assist regional bureaus with these analyses. Analyses should review cost, security, nature and scope of the development program, the level of in-country and regional support services, and suitability of proposed staffing configuration to program requirements. These analyses do not have to be exhaustive studies, but should review the options, advantages and disadvantages of various mission configurations.

Action: Regional Bureaus, M/HR/PPIM, M/AMS/OMS

Timing: When opening new USAID missions is being considered

Resources: Up to 2 person-months total for each new mission; incremental costs less, perhaps 2 person-weeks since some elements being performed already.

2. Intranet Access. Recognizing that major external obstacles exist, the Agency should continue to pursue all feasible steps to assure that all small and medium missions have access to USAID's Intranet, and to the public internet for sharing information with partners. Until this is possible, USAID/W and, in particular, Regional Bureaus (with the assistance of M/IRM) need to make alternative arrangements for transmitting essential information, such as ADS chapters, to these missions more expeditiously. More generally, small missions should be provided with the latest information technology and related training to reduce workload. The Agency should seek to take advantage of the Internet as both a "free" communications resource and as a means for better servicing remote locations.

Action: AA/M, M/IRM, Regional Bureaus

Timing: Ongoing

Resources: No additional costs – Agency already attempting; however, connecting smallest missions would be given priority.

3. Small Mission Service Credit. Foreign Service Performance Boards will continue to credit service in small missions as one of several factors that demonstrate an officer's versatility.

Action: M/HR

Timing: June, 2000 and Ongoing

Resources: 1-2 hours for discussion with AFSA

4. Evaluating Regional Service Providers. As part of the AEF process, Missions serviced by regional missions or operations should provide 360 feedback to appropriate rating officers on the quality and timeliness of regional services. This information should be incorporated into the AEFs of the principal officers by the appropriate DAAs, as well as in the regional officers' AEFs by their raters at post. M/HR will send out a reminder notice to the field to solicit feedback on the effectiveness of regional services, to ensure that this information is incorporated in annual performance evaluations.

Action: M/HR continue to require and monitor, Regional Bureaus, Regional Missions

Timing: Ongoing, for each Evaluation cycle

Resources: 1-2 hours for reminder notice, discussions with AFSA

5. FSN Compensation. Mission Directors are urged to assure that USAID's views are factored into the Post's annual FSN compensation questionnaire. Missions are encouraged to work closely with their country team on the questionnaire (which permits differing U.S. agency views). Missions should also register their unique requirements with M/HR, which will work closely with Missions, and will actively seek resolution of these issues with State's Office of Overseas Employment (PER/OE).

Action: Regional Bureaus, Mission Directors, M/HR

Timing: When Compensation Questionnaires being developed

Resources: None, when established procedures are followed

6. Streamlined Recurring Reporting. Early in the fiscal year, USAID/W should issue a comprehensive world-wide list of required recurring reports/calendars of events, including due date, so that missions can adequately plan their work in advance. This would build on the current listing of required Congressional Reports. PPC should take the lead in issuing such a list in consultation with other central and regional bureaus; ES should monitor compliance. Any reports not included on the list must be explicitly approved by PPC in consultation with the relevant bureau(s) before requested of the field. PPC will also have the authority to waive compliance for small missions. M and LPA will assist PPC with preparing the list in September and October of each year, and subsequently with reviewing any ad hoc requests.

Action: PPC coordinate with ES assistance; all other Bureaus participate

Timing: Annually, September/October

Resources: 1 person-month to develop list (for all bureaus together)

7. Limiting Small Mission Requirements. All central and regional bureaus should take explicit steps to provide a central individual, normally an experienced officer, who

together with M and PPC will be responsible for overseeing, coordinating and monitoring the needs, tasks and requirements placed on small missions. Included in these responsibilities will be ascertaining the best source for meeting significant USAID/W one time/ad hoc requests for information. Every attempt should be made to reduce ad hoc and unplanned for reporting requirements that our survey of small missions revealed to be a major management difficulty for them.

This central focal point might be a bureau coordinator or perhaps regional coordinators in central bureaus. In addition, a Notice from the Administrator should be issued directing USAID/W units to look first to non-mission sources of information (R4s, CPs, strategic plans, evaluations, desks, CDIE, etc.) before going to field missions for ad hoc information needs. Discipline in Washington is at least as important as these formal steps

Action: PPC lead, Bureaus designate coordination mechanism

Timing: August 1, 2000 for establishment of coordination mechanisms; ongoing monitoring once they are established

Resources: Up to 2 person-months per bureau annually en toto; incremental time in most cases should be considerably less.

8. Washington Backstopping. Regional Bureaus should clarify and widely promulgate roles and responsibilities of Washington and mission personnel in providing services and backstopping to the smaller missions. These will be shared with Washington and other Regional Bureaus. This is particularly important with respect to computer, contracting, controller, and EXO/ICASS functions, and coverage during periods of leave and turnover.

Action: Regional bureaus; technical assistance as necessary from M Bureau offices who will help ensure cross-fertilization of approaches among the Regional Bureaus.

Timing: September 30, 2000

Resources: 1 person/month per bureau to develop standard operating procedures, but perhaps less.

9. Relating Strategic Objectives and Procurement Approaches. PPC will revise programming system guidance - ADS 201 (Planning) and ADS 202 (Achieving) - to reduce operating costs and workload, especially at smaller missions. For bureaus and missions, this will entail better planning to prioritize and focus program objectives and to make greater use of shared procurement instruments through buy-ins and task order type arrangements. Shared arrangements can be internal to USAID or through other agencies. Using shared procurement instruments will ease our up-front procurement work and hasten implementation thereby reducing workload. Bureaus will also be expected to provide more detailed strategic planning guidance, with focused and clear parameters, to operating units. The parameters will specifically address expectations for reducing the management burden caused by activity proliferation.

Action: PPC for revised ADS; all Bureaus for strategic planning guidance

Timing: July 1, 2000 for revised ADS; next cycle for planning guidance

Resources: PPC ADS revision now being circulated; needs to be reviewed with Small Missions explicitly in mind Estimate: 1 person-week

10. Training to Support Small Mission Operations and Services. With reduced staffing levels, comprehensive training is a fundamental element for successful operations. Prospective Mission Directors must be equipped not only with technical expertise but also with administrative skills (e.g., basic contracting, legal, property management, financial management). These training needs should be met through such measures as expanded administrative modules in the Mission Directors course and appropriate short courses. Similarly, parent offices for the several management support backstops (EXO, IRM, A&A, Controller functions) should take the lead in increasing understanding and sensitivity on the part of those in full support/regional missions servicing smaller missions, tailored to the special requirements small missions face. Yearly backstop conferences would provide one such opportunity. Finally, consideration should be given by smaller missions to cross training selected local support staff members in simple system administration tasks as a collateral duty. Whenever possible, such training should take place prior to employees assuming positions at post.

Action: M/HR for courses; parent offices for backstop items, small missions for cross training

Timing: Revised training for June 2001 Mission Director/Deputy Mission Director

Courses; as soon as possible for backstop activities and FSN cross-training

Resources: 2 person-months to develop 3-5 day module (builds on existing course components): 1 person-month/year to run quarterly courses and evaluate.

11. Limiting Management Support to non-USAID Organizations. In those instances where USAID's role is essentially administrative and not programmatic (e.g., Self-help and 116e - Human Rights and Democracy), management support responsibilities should be transferred to the implementing U.S. agency (State, Justice etc). Alternatively, if there is no option to continuing such management support activities, USAID should seek to have them included as ICASS services and be reimbursed accordingly. M/B should develop a listing of programs in this category during the Spring 2000 budget review, and then recommend how to proceed.

Action: M/B, other bureaus as involved

Timing: July 1, 2000 for initial listing; TBD for negotiating turnover

Resources: 1 person-month to develop list; TBD for negotiating turnover/payments

12. Outsourcing Services. M, in consultation with PPC and GC, should develop an Agency-specific policy on outsourcing selected administrative and support services that is consistent with OMB guidance on inherently governmental functions and related laws and policies, e.g., FAIR Act, OMB Circular A-76. The new policy should give particular attention to the needs of small missions. It should be included or cross-referenced in planned revisions to ADS 201, which will address management planning as an integral component of strategic planning.

Action: GC with M, M/AS, M/OP and PPC

Timing: September 30, 2000

Resources: Estimated 4 person-months total to prepare policy.

13. Comprehensive Mission Data Base. It is essential for the entire agency to understand exactly the circumstances faced by smaller missions – how they operate, how they are staffed and by whom, the nature and size of their responsibilities, and the match between resources and requirements. To that end, M/HR should be tasked with

maintaining access to an updated mission data base, This data base should include number of personnel by categories, administrative arrangements, budget, and number of SOs - similar to the chart presented in Annex C of the full small mission report. It should be distributed widely throughout the Agency at least semi-annually, and whenever there are significant changes. It will be placed on the HR website and be available for downloading.

Action: Lawrence Brown, M/HR/PPIM

Timing: First new chart 10/1/00

Resources: 1 person-month annually

2 – Medium Priority Recommendations, Implement as Possible

These recommendations are also important, and we suggest that they be reviewed periodically by AA/M, AA/PPC and if appropriate the Management Council so that as opportunities develop, they can be implemented. Thus time frames have not been suggested, although action offices are identified.

1. Include a regular column on lessons learned from small USAID missions on EXONET so that best practices can be shared; target small and medium missions, even those without an Executive Officer. OMS EXONET manager should be the channel for accomplishing this.

Action: M/AS/OMS

2. Expand strategic planning to include management planning. ADS 201 should be revised to require that USAID Missions preparing strategic plans include a program management section as part of the plan. This is already a nominal requirement, but it needs to be strengthened and emphasized. This section would discuss the proposed staffing configuration to support the proposed strategy, including use of support from neighboring missions or Washington.

Action: PPC, M, M/B, Regional Bureaus, G

3. Increase awareness of local capacity to perform required services. Small missions should inventory functions and determine outside options, including Washington, for obtaining services (e.g., small missions may utilize some or all ICASS services and close some or all EXO operations).

Action: Missions, M, Regional Bureaus

4. Select information technology products that permit remote administration wherever possible. Consider standardizing on Information Technology (IT) products used by State wherever possible, to facilitate getting support from within embassies.

Action: M, M/IRM, Regional Bureaus

5. Improve system administration capabilities at small missions by contracting for local support on an on-call basis, and by acquiring spare parts up front (e.g., for a staff of 5, buy 6-7 PCs) to reduce vulnerability to system problems.

Action: M, Regional Bureaus

6. Require at least one FSN procurement specialist/negotiator to be on the staff of every field mission that does not have a resident CO. Similarly, require each mission having a CO to have on staff an FSN-12 Procurement Specialist to ensure quality service to small missions when the CO is away.

Action: M/OP, Regional Bureaus

7. Investigate the feasibility of preparing a comprehensive description of regulations pertaining specifically to small missions. If possible, this listing should be included in the ADS. Alternatively, sections of the ADS that are not applicable to small missions should be explicitly identified.

Action: Ops Governance ADS Team

3 - Areas Requiring Further Study or Facing Implementation Constraints

1. Canvass small missions on the various recommended approaches to organizing Regional Appraisal Committees to review the work objectives and performance evaluations of small mission employees, in light of logistic constraints. The preferred approach indicated by this survey should be piloted in March 2001.

Action: M/HR, in conjunction with Regional Bureaus

2. Replace USDH and US/PSC EXOs in small Missions with a FSN or a TCN EXO. In many cases this would require an extensive training program. (M/AS/OMS is already working on this, but there are questions of feasibility.)

Action: M/AS/OMS

3. Consider the creation of a new "Business Manager" position at small missions. This position would be responsible for management of administrative as well as program activities within the mission, effectively combining the responsibilities of an EXO, Program Officer, and Deputy Mission Director, and in some cases, Contracting Officer. Such an approach would require rethinking of traditional career paths, backstops, and training. It would recognize that, while large missions often have several staff who perform these functions, small missions also need these vital support services, but must deploy much of their staff resources to direct sustainable development work.

Action: M, M/HR, Regional Bureaus

4. Continue to explore means of expediting allocation of funds to missions, so that all sites will have more time within the fiscal year to manage their procurement activities.

Action: M, M/B, PPC, Regional Bureaus, LPA

5. Identify senior COs in each of the regional missions to serve as coordinators for the provision of A & A services in the region, including covering other missions during absences of their COs.

Action: Regional Bureaus, with M/OP technical assistance

4 – Recommendations that are already underway.

During the course of the study, work began on resolving several problems that had been identified separately. We applaud these efforts, and hope they will continue.

1. Continue current efforts to standardize formats of comprehensive annual reports (e.g., Budget Justification, formerly known as the Congressional Presentation) and the R4 to minimize data collection and reporting requirements. Similarly, required report formats should be standardized and loaded onto the Internet to the maximum extent practical for easy data collection and use.

Action: LPA, M and PPC

2. Require Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) training for all individuals with this responsibility in order to improve the effectiveness of the overall A & A program and reduce the CO workload associated with contract and grant administration. This is underway, but should be completed as soon as possible.

Action: M/HR, M/OP

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